

The Influence Of The Internet On Health Seeking Behaviour Of Nursing Mothers In Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The use of internet services to investigate health-related issues is now on the increase among nursing mothers in Nigeria; however, the quality of health information provided on various online sites is questionable. Unfortunately, very little studies have been conducted to explore the influence the internet has on the health seeking behaviour of nursing mothers in Nigeria. This study investigates the influence of the internet on health seeking behaviours of nursing mothers and examines internet's influence on their health seeking behaviour. A standardized 10-question survey on Internet use and health seeking behaviour was given to 150 nursing mothers in Ekiti State. It was found that out of 142 responses received, 109 nursing mothers (76.7%) reported using the Internet to find health information. 105 nursing mothers (96.3%) out of the 109 consult the internet for answers to their babies' health problems before consulting a doctor or a care giver. 81.6% of the nursing mothers adhere to the online physician's advice thereby leading to self medication. An aggregate of 101 (92.6%) nursing mothers submitted that the internet influences their health seeking decisions. Conclusively, the tests of hypothesis show a significant relationship between the use of internet and health seeking behaviours of nursing mothers and also, between the use of internet and self medication among them.

Key words: Internet, Nursing mothers, Health seeking behaviour, self medication.

INTRODUCTION

The world has gone digital and this has transformed the scenery of health care, information and health seeking behaviour amongst individuals. The Internet and World Wide Web have turn out to be vital resources for persons trying to obtain information about their health. A study found out that at least one of three individual use the web for health diagnoses or get more information about a worry on their health (Fox & Duggan, 2013). The global network serves as a means to put information together before, during and after an appointment with the doctor to get predictable information such as drug prescriptions, self-diagnosis and care (Smith M, Saunders R, Stuckhardt L, 2013). The use of the World Wide Web is principally significant because getting hold of information is a fundamental coping approach to managing one's health (Tanni, 2012) and Nursing Mothers are not left out. Health seeking behaviour is largely concerned with taking pragmatic decision to deal with health problems and seek out medical care and attention at a given time and place within the available resources from an individual perspective. Health seeking' is a conditioned behaviour, so any effort to encourage people to seek out care requires an understanding of their enthusiasm for such behaviour. Only through an in-depth understanding of the involved factors determining behavioural practices can health promotion programmes and or interposition successfully be acquainted into the realism of the people's hearts to

convey the changes in health behaviour. Behaviour change theories and models such as the Health Belief Model (HBM); Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA); Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Transtheoretical Model have been extensively useful in public health in an effort to elucidate or envisage health-seeking behaviours. The use of this theories and models authorize recognition and perception of people's health-seeking behaviour away from their knowledge, attitudes and practices. Even though most of these theories and models have similar components, HBM is a health-specific behavioural cognitive model (Metta, 2016). Health information seeking has been considered a significant facilitator for supporting, sustaining and restoring people's health (Johnson & Case, 2012). Particularly, scholars have taken note of Nursing Mothers role as committed and active health information seekers since Nursing Mothers have been usually more concerned in management of health related issues for their kids and family as a whole (Lee, 2015; Skranes, Løhaugen, Botngård, & Skranes, 2014). A number of scholars have paid specific attention to the switch to motherhood from spinsterhood and newly wedded, which denotes a stage when women begins to search for information actively in the perspective of health (Renahy et al., 2010; Plantin & Daneback, 2009). Lately, the Internet has turned out to be a widely held basis of well-being information for Nursing Mothers (Geo et al., 2013). This has been driven by right to use and there is

proof to point out that Nursing Mothers are more likely to search for information at particular stages in nursing their babies and in response to certain situations (Song et al., 2013). Nursing a child is a natural occurrence in a woman's life which involves observing, watching, monitoring, medical check-ups and attention which can be enjoyable and frustrating at the same time. As a result, many Nursing Mothers make use of the Internet as a means to get information and also a source of relief when in doubt (Lagan et.al, 2011). In spite of the advantages of the influence of the internet on health seeking behavior, this may also offer a threat to safety for regular visitors when there is no awareness of the superiority of the health information they get. Studies also stated that seeking information about health via the web is sometimes scientifically insufficient or inadequate. Some nursing mothers furthermore pointed out that it can be challenging to find trustworthy information and a number of studies indicate that some websites provide instruction and recommendations that is not on track, to a number of degrees, from the recommendations in the general medical guidelines (Sayakhot & Carolan-Olah, 2016). When the health information obtained from the Internet is of uncertain quality, it may unenthusiastically have an effect on the doctor-patient relationship. The extensive inconsistency of information on the Internet and the viable relevance of some information providers can instigate uncertainty to the user and make it challenging to pinpoint exact and dependable health information. Furthermore, there are some barriers to gain right to use the Internet such as lack of computer skills, educational level and geographic location. Babies go through quite a lot of common symptoms, while a lot of these symptoms are not hurtful and self-limiting, Nursing Mothers report feeling not empowered and nervous and principal care consultation rates for these symptoms are therefore sometimes on the high side. One could assume that seeking for health information online makes available the desired information and knowledge, reassures Nursing Mothers and in so doing influences health seeking behaviour and health care utilisation. Similarly, some studies recommend that physicians are still to be seen as the most significant basis of health information (Abdaoui et al., 2015) and that information gathered on the internet may perhaps be an added advantage to the information from physicians, rather than replace it. Though more and more health institutions create online line-ups and make available of online services that make available information that then would be provided by a physician (Varol, 2013). The extensive usage of the Internet brings up several questions about its influence on health seeking behaviour, health facilities utilisation and finally on health results. Recent studies have shown that some features of Internet users who seek health information have been well-known to have said there is a relationship between their health seeking behaviour on the Internet and the utilization of the health information (Sally B. Owusu-Addo et. al, 2016). Some researchers have suggested that use of the Internet might in fact reduce the cost of primary care services in systems with universal health care. In that set of circumstance, one might anticipate a negative affiliation connecting use of the Internet and primary care utilisation. Others might contemplate that Internet usage represents just an alternative means for activated,

information-seeking behaviour, in which case the prediction might be for a positive bond with primary care utilization. Using the Internet to explore health information has many benefits: ease of access, availability of an extensive variety of illustrated and audiovisual health information, as well as providing an opportunity to ask for experts' view. In addition, its vagueness allows users to convey their health challenges and disclose experiences in confidence with other people in a similar situation. The Internet can play a role in the enhancement of social interface, better coping with life situations, more information about specific diseases, emotional reinforcement, and progress in clinical outcomes for health information seekers (Ghweeba et. al, 2017). This study therefore examines the influence of internet use on health seeking behaviours of nursing mothers in Ekiti-State, Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this study is to investigate the influence of the internet on health seeking behaviours of nursing mothers in Ekiti - State while the specific objectives are:

1. To investigate the impact of internet on nursing mothers' decision to consult a physician when their babies are ill.
2. To find out whether the use of internet increases or reduces self medication among nursing mothers in Ekiti - State.

HYPOTHESIS 1.

Ho: there is no significant relationship between internet consultation and health seeking behaviours of nursing mothers in Ekiti - State.

H1: there is a significant relationship between internet consultation and health seeking behaviours of nursing mothers in Ekiti - State.

HYPOTHESIS 2.

Ho: there is no significant relationship between internet consultation and self medication among nursing mothers in Ekiti - State.

H1: there is a significant relationship between internet consultation and self medication among nursing mothers in Ekiti - State.

METHOD

The study adopted the qualitative/ descriptive correlational study. The investigators sought to describe the relationship between internet use and health seeking behaviour of nursing mothers in Ekiti - State. The study population of this study consists of 142 nursing mothers in Ekiti State, attending postnatal clinic and infant emergency. Purposive sampling technique was used in this study because only the people concerned were considered. Structured questionnaire was used for the study and consisted of both open and closed ended questions; with carefully constructed research questions titled 'the influence of internet on health seeking behaviour of nursing mothers in Ekiti-State Nigeria'. The data generated from the respondents were used to further explain the research objectives formulated for the study. The statistical method employed is descriptive in nature using simple percentage. The informed consent of the hospital administrators were obtained in writing while those of the nursing mothers were obtained orally. Completed Questionnaires were

collected at the spot by the researchers. Correlation coefficient model was used to identify significant predictors with Level of significance taken at 0.01.

DATA ANALYSIS

Figure 1:

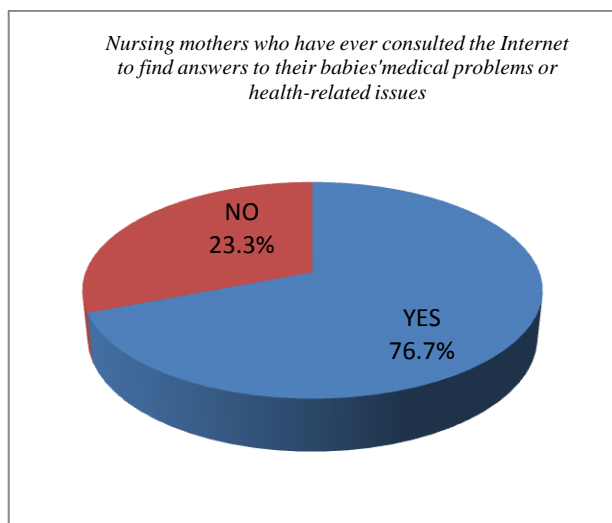


Figure 1 reveals that 109 nursing mothers (76.7%) have consulted the internet to find answers to their babies' medical problems or health related issues of their babies. only 33 nursing mothers (23.3%) have never consulted the internet to find answers to health related issues.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of nursing mothers who found diagnosis of their babies' ailment via the internet.

Response	Freq.	%
Yes	72	66.1
No	21	19.2
Sometimes	16	14.7
Total	109	100

Source: field survey 2017.

Table 1 shows that 66.1% of nursing mothers found diagnosis of ailment through the internet while 19.2% of respondent did not find the correct diagnosis of their babies' ailments. 14.7% of respondent sometimes found diagnosis of their ailment via the internet.

Table 2: Percentage age distribution of nursing mothers who have ever utilised the internet to get health information.

Age (years)	Freq	%
Below 20	34	31.2
21-30	46	42.2
31-40	24	22.0
Above 40	5	4.6
Total	109	100

Source: field survey 2017.

Table 2 shows that online information seeking behaviours are more prevalent among nursing mothers who fall below 31years (73%) than other age groups

Table 3: Percentage distribution of nursing mothers who found prescriptions and treatment of their babies' ailment via the internet

Response	Freq	%
Yes	83	76.1
No	26	23.9
Total	109	100

Source: field survey 2017.

From the research findings in table 3, a total of 83 (76.1%) respondents who have ever consulted the internet for their babies' health related issues found prescriptions and treatment of ailments on the internet. Only 26 (23.9%) respondents were unable to get prescriptions and treatment via the internet.

Table 4: Percentage distribution of nursing mothers who consult the internet for answers to their babies' health problems before consulting a doctor or a care giver.

Response	Freq	%
Yes	105	96.4
No	2	1.8
Sometimes	2	1.8
Total	109	100

Source: field survey 2017.

Table 4 reveals that almost all the respondents (96.4%) prefer to consult the internet for health issues than consult a doctor or care giver. 1.8% of respondents prefer to consult a doctor or care giver than to consult the internet, while 1.8% of respondents sometimes consult the internet before consulting a doctor or a care giver.

Table 5: Percentage distribution showing how frequently nursing mothers consult doctor or care giver when ill before the Internet became available.

Response	freq	%
Very often	86	78.9
Often	17	15.6
Not often	6	5.5
Total	109	100

Source: field survey 2017.

Table 5 shows that before the internet became available to the 109 respondent who have ever consulted the internet for health related issues, 78.9% visited the doctor or care giver very often, 15.6% of respondents often consulted the physicians while only 5.5% of respondents didn't visit the hospital often.

Figure 2:

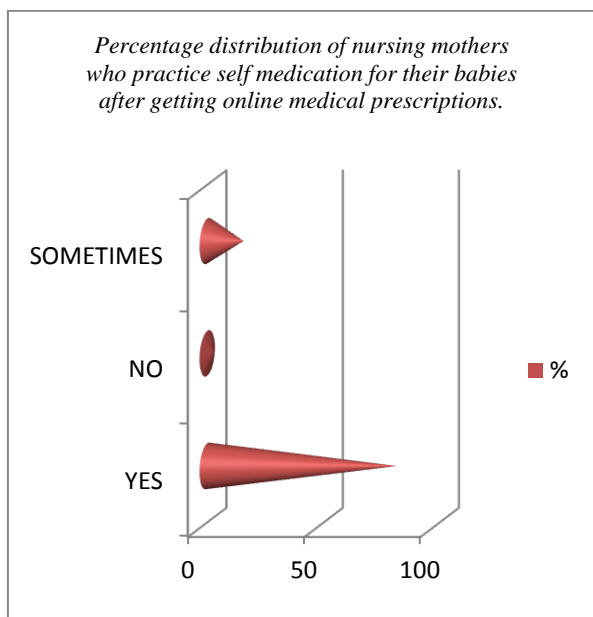


Figure 2 reveals that 81.6% of respondents who have ever consulted the internet for health related issues, practice self medication. 2.8% of respondents do not practice self medication while 15.6% of respondents do not really practice self medication.

Figure 3:

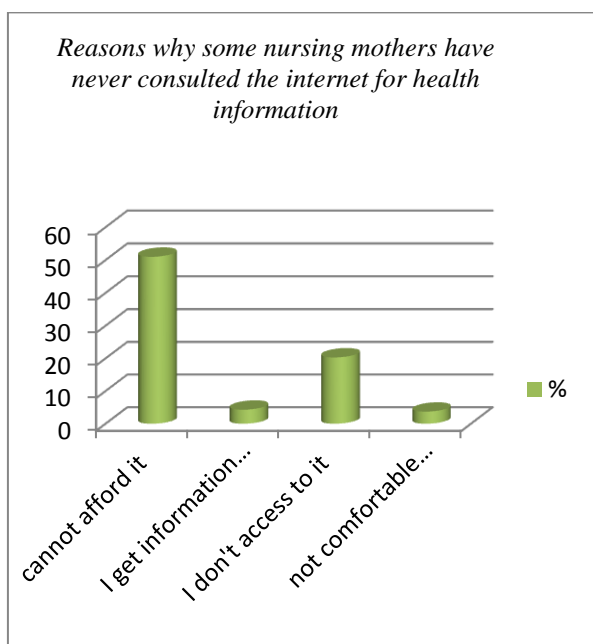


Figure 3 reveals that (51%) of respondent who have never consulted the internet for health information did so because they could not afford it, 4.3% get health related information through other sources, 20.3% do not have access to the internet, 3.7% are not comfortable searching the internet for information about their health, while 20.7% do not trust the information on the internet.

Table 6: Who should be first consulted among the following when you need medical attention for your baby.

Place	Freq	%
Health Centre	16	11.3
Hospitals	21	14.8
Pharmacies	9	6.3
Internet	96	67.6
Total	142	100

Source: field survey 2017.

Table 6 shows that 11.3% of respondents submitted that the first point of contact for nursing mothers when their babies need medical attention is the health centre. 14.8% of respondents feel the hospital should be the first point of contact. 6.3% agreed that pharmacies should be contacted first when medical help is needed. More than half of the respondents (67.6%) insisted that the internet should be the first to be consulted when medical attention is needed for their babies.

Table 7: Internet influence on of health seeking behaviour of nursing mothers

Response	Freq.	%
Yes	101	92.6
No	3	2.8
Uncertain	5	4.6
Total	109	100

Source: field survey 2017.

Table 7 clearly shows that 101 (92.6%) out of the respondents who have consulted the internet for health related information submitted that the internet influences their health seeking decisions. 2.8% of respondents maintains that the use of internet does not influence their health seeking behaviour while 4.6% of the respondents were uncertain about the influence of internet on their health seeking behaviour.

Table 8: Correlations

			practice self medication.	nursing mothers who have consulted the internet
Kendall's tau_b	practice self medication.	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.986**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	109	109
Spearman's rho	nursing mothers who have consulted the internet	Correlation Coefficient	.986**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	109	109
Kendall's tau_b	practice self medication.	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.997**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	109	109
Spearman's rho	nursing mothers who have consulted the internet	Correlation Coefficient	.997**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	109	109

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8 shows that there is a significant relationship between internet consultation and self medication among nursing mothers in Ekiti- State, Nigeria.

Table 9: Correlations

			health seeking behaviours of nursing mothers	nursing mothers who have consulted the internet
Kendall's tau_b	health seeking behaviours of nursing mothers	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.410**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	109	109
	nursing mothers who have consulted the internet	Correlation Coefficient	.410**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	109	109
Spearman's rho	health seeking behaviours of nursing mothers	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.412**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	109	109
	nursing mothers who have consulted the internet	Correlation Coefficient	.412**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	109	109

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 9 shows that there is a significant relationship between internet consultation and health seeking behaviours of nursing mothers in Ekiti – State, Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study found that access to online health information is prevalent among nursing mothers in Ekiti State. It was also discovered that online information seeking behaviours are more prevalent among nursing mothers who fall below 31years than other age groups. Even though getting medical information from the Internet may attract some benefits for nursing mothers, Internet use among them reduces the number of times they consult their doctors. This clearly leads to an increase in self medication, a dangerous act; which could place a burden on physicians and other care givers or increase infant mortality when the situation goes out of hand.

Recommendation

It is recommended that more studies should be carried out to further investigate the influence of Internet on health seeking behaviours of nursing mothers in Nigeria. An improved understanding of the true effect of this information-seeking behaviour on health outcomes would help physicians further engage their patients in the collaborative relationships. Also, more research is required to discover the most effective ways for health professionals to make information available to nursing mothers thereby reducing self medication and improving how they consult their doctors for proper diagnosis and treatment of their babies.

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